# California's Progress Toward Achieving *ONE SYSTEM:* Reforming Education to Serve ALL Students
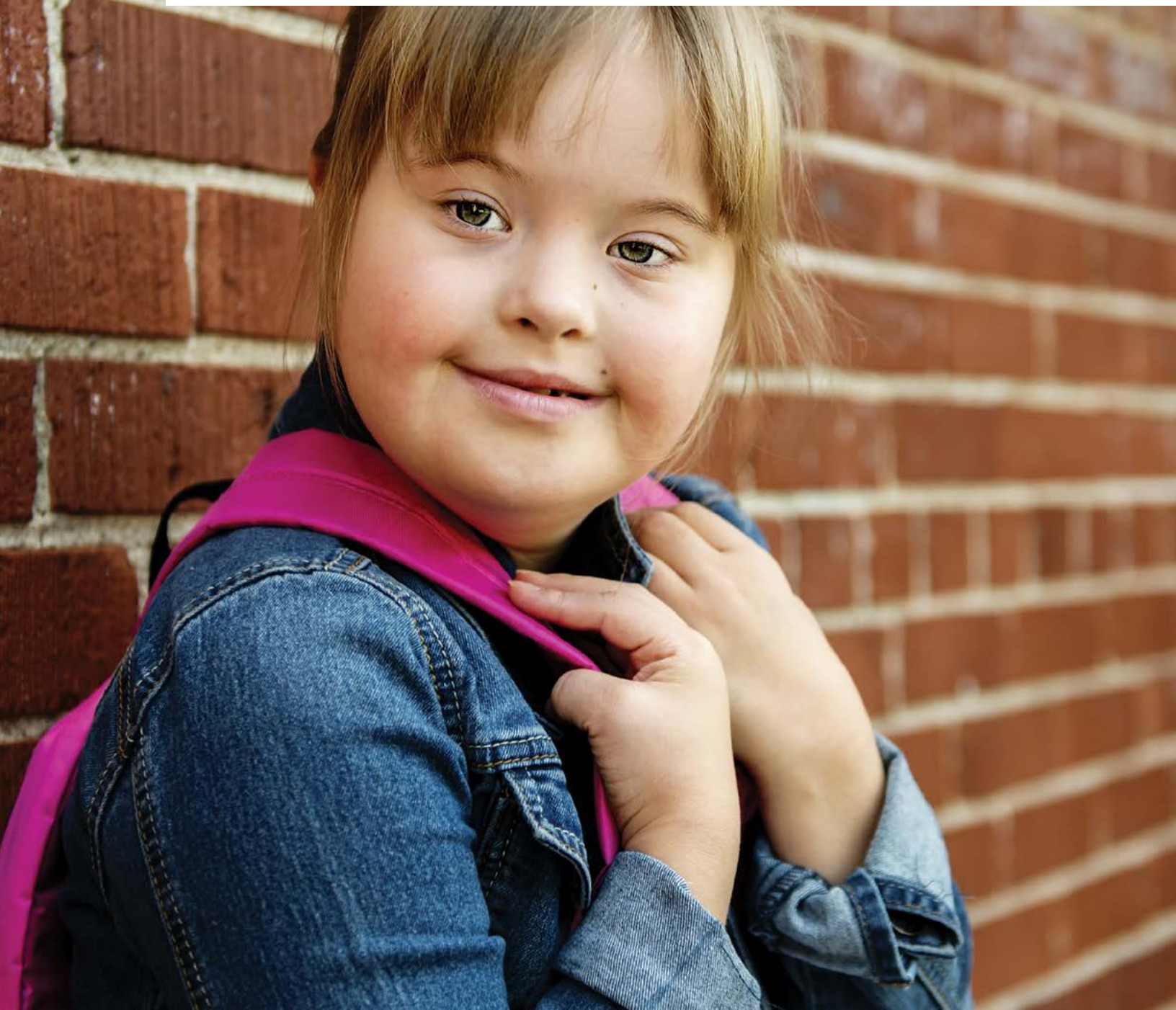
Policy and System Changes Impacting Students with Disabilities Since the 2015 Report of California's Statewide Task Force on Special Education

## Publishing Information

# Acknowledgments

In 2013, a Statewide Task Force on Special Education, comprised of 34 representatives from key stakeholder groups embarked on a study to document the reasons special education was not more successful and what must be changed in both policy and practice to improve services for all children identified under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) as having a disability. The result of this work was a 2015 report entitled, *ONE SYSTEM: Reforming Education to Serve ALL Students, Report of California's Statewide Task Force on Special Education.*

**Tina Tranzor,** Education Administrator, Opportunities for All Branch

**Stacey Wedin,** Education Administrator, Instruction and Measurement Branch

**Noelia Hernandez,** Education Administrator, Special Education Division

**Sheila Self,** Education Administrator, Early Learning and Care Division

**Michelle Valdivia,** Finance Budget Analyst, Department of Finance

**Aaron Christensen,** Education Programs Consultant, Special Education Division

**Barbara Boyd,** Education Programs Consultant, Special Education Division

**Chris Essman,** Education Programs Consultant, Special Education Division

**Katie Maloney-Krips,** Education Programs Consultant, Special Education Division

**Nicolas Wavrin,** Education Programs Consultant, Special Education Division

**Wesley Roberson,** Education Programs Consultant, Special Education Division

## California Commission on Teacher Credentialing

**Teri Clark,** Director, Professional Services Division

**Mary Sandy,** Executive Director

## California Collaborative for Educational Excellence

**Matt Navo,** Executive Director

## WestEd

**Sara Doutre,** Senior Program Associate II, Special Education Policy and Practice

**Elissa Einhorn,** Writer, Special Education Policy and Practice

**Dona Meinders,** Project Director, Special Education Policy and Practice

**Jason Willis,** Area Director

## Special Education Local Plan Area/County Offices of Education

**Kristin Brooks,** Ed.D., Executive Director, Supporting Inclusive Practices Project, Riverside County Office of Education

**Christine Olmstead,** Ed.D., Associate Superintendent, Educational Services, Orange County Department of Education

**Robin Ryan,** Program Coordinator, Seeds of Partnership Project, Sacramento County Office of Education

**Kevin Schaefer,** Director of Equity and Inclusive Practices for the Supporting Inclusive Practices Project, El Dorado County Office of Education

**Troy Tickle,** Executive Director, Placer County SELPA

**Scott Turner,** Executive Director, East San Gabriel Valley SELPA

**Kristin Wright,** Executive Director, Equity, Diversity, Early Intervention, and Support Services, Sacramento County Office of Education

## Other

**Cindy Chandler,** Retired Executive Director, Family Soup

**Jane Floethe-Ford,** Director, Education Services, Parents Helping Parents

**Victoria Graf,** Professor of Educational Support Services, Loyola Marymount University

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# Executive Summary

## Purpose of this report

In 2015, special education reform efforts in California, working toward a vision of reimagining a coherent system of supports for special education that effectively serve students with disabilities, began in earnest with the release of the California Statewide Special Education Task Force's recommendations. This report is a culminating analysis of the progress that has been made since the release of the report and which seeks to highlight milestones achieved since the 2015 release of these recommendations and which will serve to support and guide ongoing statewide efforts to improve special education policy and outcomes for students with disabilities and their families.

## Introduction

In 2013, the *California Statewide Special Education Task Force* (Task Force) was convened to address persistent poor outcomes for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and students in the California K–12 system, up to age 22, with disabilities. The Task Force was charged with identifying specific areas of need to address, identifying barriers in the system, and recommending changes to the system. Experts from across California gathered to suggest how the state might reimagine its delivery of services, funding, teacher preparation, and policies related to educating students with disabilities.

The culminating report, published by the Task Force in 2015, laid out a myriad of system reforms designed to improve educational outcomes for students with disabilities. Additional information about the Task Force can be found in the March 9, 2015, California Department of Education (CDE) memo at https://www.cde.ca.gov/nr/ne/yr15/yr15rel18.asp. The report, titled *ONE SYSTEM: Reforming Education to Serve ALL Students*, has served as a touchpoint for researchers, policymakers, and state leaders, who have collectively committed to better serving students with disabilities. The report can be accessed on the CDE web page at https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/sr/taskforce2015.asp.

Among the Task Force's recommendations was an overarching conclusion that California's special education system would improve if general education and special education worked seamlessly together as one coherent system designed to address the needs of all students. The *2015 ONE SYSTEM* report concluded that improving how the state educates students with disabilities enhances education for all:

*"In a coherent system of education, all children and students with disabilities are considered general education students first; and all educators, regardless of which students they are assigned to serve, have a collective responsibility to see that all children receive the education and the supports they need to maximize their development and potential, allowing them to participate meaningfully in the nation's economy and democracy."*

Note: The *2015 ONE SYSTEM* report was intended to create momentum and discourse in California's efforts to reform special education. Since it was published, numerous improvements have been made to California's general and special education landscapes.

# Project Design

WestEd was tasked by the CDE to research, report, and reflect on milestones achieved since the *2015 ONE SYSTEM* report. In 2020, WestEd interviewed state agency leaders and staff, education policy experts, local educational agencies (LEAs), and others to identify progress within the seven areas identified in the report. This document highlights milestones achieved since 2015.

# Recommendation Milestones

The *2015 ONE SYSTEM* report identified the following seven distinct and interconnected areas of focus to improve outcomes for students with disabilities:

1.  Early Learning

2.  Evidence-Based School and Classroom Practices

3.  Educator Preparation and Professional Learning

4.  Assessment

5.  Accountability

6.  Family and Student Engagement

7.  Special Education Financing

The layout of this report includes abbreviated descriptions of each of the seven areas identified in the *2015 ONE SYSTEM* report. Following each description is a section for updates on milestones that have occurred since the publication of the report. The recommendations for each section are taken directly from, and highlighted in, the executive summary of the *2015 ONE SYSTEM* report which can be found at https://www.casponline.org/pdfs/legislative/Executive%20Summary%20W.%20CONTACTS-1.pdf. This report uses the term "State" to describe all entities within California that are responsible for addressing improved outcomes for students with disabilities.

# Early Learning

**Recommendations from the *2015 ONE SYSTEM* Report:**
The Task Force described early learning as essential to providing the inclusive runway for children with disabilities as they enter the education system. The report made the following recommendations:

- Increase coordination and access to high-quality early care and preschool for all students, especially for children with disabilities, children who grow up in poverty, and children who are dual language learners, with access not dependent upon geography or service provider.

- Increase funding to provide equitable financial support for high-quality early care and education and support equity of access for children with disabilities throughout the state.

- Articulate family-friendly protocols for transitioning between Part C and Part B services.

- Establish program standards that all providers must use, which reflect evidence-based and developmentally appropriate practice.

- Utilize uniform assessments based on common standards, that inform instruction in real-time, accurately monitor student/child growth, and are educator-friendly.

- Establish clear and specific competencies that are part of all early childhood educator preparation programs and are a part of required professional development training and technical assistance for educators already in the field.

## Early Learning Recommendations Milestones

Since 2015, California has prioritized the expansion of inclusive preschool and early care opportunities for students with disabilities through fiscal and policy incentives. These efforts have been made to create and expand additional inclusive preschool slots for children with disabilities, increased professional learning, and the building of infrastructure to support high-quality early education. The State continues to support increased access to inclusive early childhood opportunities for students with disabilities through:

- Funding and expanding the Supporting Inclusive Practices (SIP) project, a technical assistance project funded through the CDE, Special Education

Division (SED). Additional information can be found at https://www.sipinclusion.org.

- Refocusing efforts and training on the Preschool Learning Foundations to support high-quality early learning environments. Additional information can be found at https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/psfoundations.asp.

- Releasing Master Plan for Early Learning and Care by Governor Gavin Newsom as part of a commitment to develop a research-based roadmap for building a comprehensive and equitable early learning and care system over the next decade. Additional information can be found at https://www.gov.ca.gov/2020/12/01/governor-newsom-releases-the-master-plan-for-early-learning-and-care-california-for-all-kids.

- Expanding support and access to Embedded Instruction teaching practices through a technical assistance project funded by CDE, SED.

The State has designated additional funding and increased professional learning on Embedded Instruction through the Inclusive Early Education Expansion Program (IEEEP) which increased funding, training, and focus on evidence-based inclusive opportunities for children with disabilities in preschool/early education. Additional information on IEEEP can be found at https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/op/ieeepfaqs.asp. In support of advanced high-quality inclusive options, the State has increased alignment between Embedded Instruction teaching practices and the Desired Results Access Project (DRDP) over the next five years. DRDP is tasked with ensuring continued support to the field. For additional information on DRDP see their website at https://www.draccess.org.

CDE's Early Learning and Care Division established the Impact Inclusion Statewide Leadership Team (SLT) which was required, per statute, as part of the IEEEP grant. Impact Inclusion is a stakeholder group made up of multiple agencies representing birth to preschool and is tasked with providing feedback and support to the IEEEP grant sites in implementing inclusive practices or professional development. The SLT has made progress toward eliminating barriers to inclusive preschool opportunities for students with disabilities. The SLT's alignment efforts between general and special education have created national action around inclusion and bridging special education with general education. In order to address the Task Force recommendation to improve student transitions from IDEA Part C to Part B, the California State Budget Act of 2020, under Senate Bill (SB) 75, funded and called for a workgroup tasked with making policy recommendations on how to improve transition and maintain continuity of services and support from Early Intervention (IDEA Part C) to a more seamless and family/child-friendly transition to preschool

(IDEA Part B). Future actions will be influenced by the findings of the Part C to B Workgroup report, which are due to be released in fall 2021.

Lastly, new Teaching Performance Expectations (TPEs) and Teaching Performance Assessments (TPAs) will be developed and adopted by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC). When the work is finalized, updates will be included on the CTC Special Education web page at https://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/special-education. The new TPEs and TPAs will address stakeholder-identified alignment issues related to instructional preparation for early childhood special education and early childhood.

# Evidence-Based School and Classroom Practices

**Recommendations from the *2015 ONE SYSTEM* Report:**
The Task Force described Evidence Based Practices (EBPs) as essential knowledge to providing the inclusive learning opportunities for students with disabilities. The report made the following recommendations

- Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is implemented and established as a critical area of professional learning for educator training and has a broad understanding in all schools.

- MTSS is developed throughout the State, incorporating robust and aligned systems at all organizational levels that support response to instruction and intervention (RtI[2]) approaches and systematic programs of academic, behavioral, and social and emotional learning.

- Social-emotional learning supports are provided through a comprehensive and blended system, are available in all schools and districts, and include lessons on self-management, social interaction, and social responsibility, which are infused in the daily curriculum.

- General education resources are used to intervene as early as possible (infant, toddler, preschool, elementary) with evidence-based and multi-tiered social-emotional supports before referral to special education services.

- Technology support is provided at the state, regional, district, school, and classroom levels to ensure the successful implementation of the California State Standards and use of California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) statewide assessments, and to ensure that students with disabilities have access to and can use the assistive devices they need to learn.

- All students with disabilities have access to comprehensive and effective transition services and programs; model programs are identified, implemented, and aligned with college/career and independent living standards through collaboration among LEAs, Charter Management Organizations, and Regional Occupational Programs so that students with disabilities are included in Regional Occupation and Career Technical Education programs, including Pathway grants, and other local programs.

# Improving Evidence-Based School and Classroom Practices Milestones

Since the publication of the *2015 ONE SYSTEM* report, California has prioritized the Task Force's recommendations to improve outcomes for students with disabilities through sharing of EBPs and supports by creating a more accessible Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework of curriculum and instruction. The implementation of the Scaling Up Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports (SUMS) initiative for local implementation of the use of an MTSS framework has been funded and supported to continue to spread and scale effective EBPs across the statewide system of support. For additional information on the SUMS initiative see their web page at https://ocde.us/MTSS/Pages/California_SUMS_Initiative.aspx.

The State has enhanced statewide technical assistance to expand support and training in inclusive practices through the expansion of the SIP project. SIP is co-led by the El Dorado County Office of Education and the Riverside County Office of Education to provide technical assistance and professional learning for educators and school leaders across the state to build capacity for increased implementation of EBPs that promote opportunities that are more inclusive for students with disabilities. The SIP project also developed and provided support for professional learning of paraprofessionals, consisting of a yearlong set of webinar offerings focused on roles and responsibilities, behavior support, and building understanding of UDL.

Further efforts to spread the use of EBPs have also been funded by the State. In the 2019 State Budget, funding was allocated to create the California Educator Workforce Investment Grant (EWIG) Program, to assist California in scaling UDL practices. See the EWIG website at https://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ps/ewig.asp for additional information. One of the projects funded through the EWIG program is the California Coalition for Inclusive Literacy which is designed to support teachers in LEAs in building practices to increase and improve inclusive literacy opportunities for students with disabilities and students who are English learners. For additional information on the project see their web page at https://www.cast.org/our-work/projects/ccil-inclusive-literacy-california-students.

In addition, statewide efforts in the area of transition for students with disabilities have been supported through the formation of a statewide workgroup charged with examining alternative pathways to a high school diploma for these students. The 2020 State Budget provided $250,000 for the formation of the workgroup which will develop recommendations to suggest potential new pathways for students with

disabilities to receive a high school diploma. It is also tasked with recommending whether the State should adopt an Alternate High School Diploma for students with significant cognitive disabilities, as allowed through federal law in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

Robust efforts to enhance Statewide EBPs for social emotional learning (SEL) practices in the field has resulted in the creation of the California HOPE (CalHOPE) initiative, a statewide SEL community of practice (COP) hosted by the Sacramento County Office of Education. Formed in 2020, this COP brings together practitioners and experts, in the interest of building statewide capacity to utilize evidence-based SEL practices in schools. For additional information on the CalHOPE project, see their website at https://www.scoe.net/media/llja41dp/calhope.pdf. The State's SEL efforts have also increased through the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning and the 2020 Advance SEL in California Campaign, which have added supports in helping the field with implementation of SEL best practices. See the CDE memo from May 21, 2020, announcing the project at https://www.cde.ca.gov/nr/ne/yr20/yr20rel37.asp.

Statewide coordination efforts through California's system of support, lead to partnership with county offices of education and Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) Leads, to support improved outcomes for students with disabilities and other groups identified as needing improvement, based on various performance measures reflected on the California School Dashboard. The SELPA Leads are charged with building the capacity of SELPAs and LEAs across the State to effectively serve students with disabilities. The SELPA Resource Leads include SELPA System Improvement Leads (SILs) and SELPA Content Leads. The SILs, which include the El Dorado County SELPA, the Riverside County SELPA, and the West San Gabriel Valley SELPA, are funded to build the capacities of SELPAs and LEAs around data use and governance, continuous improvement methodologies, and high-leverage practices. See the SIL web page for additional information at https://systemimprovement.org.  The SELPA Content Leads were selected and funded to build capacity in a specific content area. These content areas include Improving Outcomes for English Learners with Disabilities, led by the Imperial County SELPA; the California Autism Professional Training and Information Network, led by the Marin County SELPA; Open Access—Learning and Participation for All, led by the Placer County SELPA; and the Equity, Disproportionality & Design Project, led by the San Diego South County SELPA. For additional information on the SELPA Content Leads see the web page on the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence web site at https://ccee-ca.org/system-of-support/selpa-lead-agencies.

# Educator Preparation and Professional Learning

**Recommendations from the *2015 ONE SYSTEM* Report:**
The Task Force report described Educator Preparation and Professional Learning as a coherent approach to educator preparation and learning, a common foundation for all instruction—a "common trunk"—and multiple pathways for teachers to earn a credential. California's system of teacher credentialing would ensure that all teachers—both general education and special education—enter the profession able to effectively use needs-based interventions and collaborate with other educators in a unified system. The report made the following recommendations:

- General and special education preparation programs should require all aspiring teachers to master content standards, evidence-based strategies, pedagogy, intervention strategies, and collaboration among teachers and

across assignments—essentially in a "common trunk" of preparation between general and special educators.

- Special education credentials should be designed to prepare teachers to address the instructional needs of all students, not specific disability types. At the same time, specific authorizations for educating students with low-incidence disabilities—students who have lost hearing or vision, for example—should remain a critically valuable component of special education.

- All special education credentials should prepare and authorize special education teachers to instruct and provide any needed support to general education students as well as students with disabilities.

- Preparation for special education credentials should include an in-depth understanding of and strategies for supporting students who struggle with learning, students who struggle with behavioral disorders, students who struggle because of physical disabilities, and health care needs.

- Special educators should also have an understanding of assistive technology and augmentative and alternative communication systems, the critical transitions times (early childhood, middle school, high school, and adulthood) in the life of a student with disabilities, and strategies for planning transitions, providing supports for student success, and supporting students and families through those transitions.

- Paraeducators/Instructional Assistants should receive professional learning opportunities and appropriate supervision as well as career pathway opportunities to become credentialed teachers.

- Professional learning opportunities for educators in both special and general education should be purposefully integrated.

- The professional learning for all educators should be extensive, coordinated across grades and disciplines, and aligned with the implementation of new standards and the site and district Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) goals.

- Incentive grants should be made available to colleges and universities, local education agencies and county offices of education to develop innovative programs that combine preparation to become general and special education teachers.

## Improving Educator Preparation and Professional Learning Milestones

California has improved both educator and administrator preparation. The CTC has been instrumental in redesigning educator and administrator preparation, training, and implementation of new credentialing, all designed to encourage and model purposeful integration of professional learning opportunities for special education and general education.

Specifically, the CTC has adopted TPEs that prospective teachers must meet in order to earn their credential. TPEs for both general education and special education have been revised and updated with a focus on collaboration and inclusion. TPEs for special educators in relation to assistive technology, augmentative and alternative communication systems, and transitions are now embedded in requirements for educator preparation program curriculum. The CTC has restructured the education specialist credentials, which will move from a disability-based focus to a student support needs focus. The new TPEs have increased expectations regarding how new single- and multiple-subject credentialed teachers teach students with disabilities in the general education classroom. All educator preparation programs for education specialists will be required to meet the new TPEs and program standards by summer/fall 2022. Additional information on the new requirements and updates on future changes can be found on the CTC website at https://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/special-education.

The State has designated additional funding to strengthen educator preparation and professional learning for teachers. Some of these funding opportunities include:

- The Golden State Teacher Grant (GSTG) Program, which awards up to $20,000 for eligible, currently enrolled students in CTC-approved teacher preparation programs within California institutions of higher education, has been established to encourage more individuals to enter the teaching profession. The Budget Act of 2020 (Senate Bill 74) directed $15 million to the CTC in an effort to expand grants to special education teachers through the GSTG program. These funds will be available over a five-year period. See the CTC website for additional information at https://www.ctc.ca.gov/commission/notices/gs-teacher-list.

- In 2020, the 21st Century California School Leadership Academy was established. Proposition 98 General Fund expenditures of $25 million in one-time funds were allocated in the 2021 State Budget. See the CDE web page at https://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ai/ca21csla.asp for additional information on the program. Additionally, to assist in the development of

the 21st Century California School Leadership Academy, the CDE and the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE) are directed by *California Education Code* Section 44690(c)(1) to establish a process to organize and select high-quality professional learning providers to offer professional learning opportunities to administrators and other school leaders. These providers will apply for grants from CDE and CCEE to provide these professional learning opportunities, free of charge, to LEAs that receive federal Title II funds on a statewide basis.

CDE has also provided professional learning opportunities for paraprofessionals working with students with disabilities, with the development of a yearlong webinar series provided by the SIP project. The SIP Professional Learning Webinar Series for Paraeducators: Building a Community of Support, focused on developing skills for supporting students with disabilities in inclusive environments. For additional information on the webinar series see the SIP website at https://www.sipinclusion.org/events/paraprofessional-professional-learning-building-an-inclusive-community-of-support. Additionally, the CDE Special Education Division has collaborated with the CDE Educator Excellence Office to ensuring that strands for paraprofessionals and special educators are included in the annual conference for Title II Services for Private Schools.

# Assessment

**Recommendations from the *2015 ONE SYSTEM* Report:**
The Task Force report called for improvements to how California school teams set goals and assess the progress of students with disabilities. The report envisioned an Individualized Education Program (IEP) process that evolves and adapts to the changing landscape of instruction for all students. The report made the following recommendations:

- Align IEP goals to the current California State Standards.

- Keep parents informed of changes in standards, the rationale for those changes, the implications for IEPs and courses of study, and strategies for supporting their children at home.

- Develop a new assessment for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities to replace the California Alternate Performance Assessment and ensure it is directly and rigorously aligned with the State Standards.

- Ensure teachers and schools are accountable for the progress that students with the most significant cognitive disabilities make in meeting the standards.

- Create and disseminate samples of standards-aligned IEPs, along with comprehensive training on adapting those examples or models for use in IEP meetings.

- Ensure Smarter Balanced assessments, especially the use of the "Designated Supports" and "Accommodations" for students receiving special education services, are carefully and thoroughly reviewed for effectiveness and accessibility on an individual student basis.

- Create a common data-gathering system to record and report on student IEP goals, monitor progress toward goals, and evaluate implementation of standards- based IEPs statewide.

## Improving Assessment, Individual Education Programs, and Data Milestones

Since the *2015 ONE SYSTEM* report recommendations were published, California has made significant progress in ensuring that every child has access to grade-level standards and assessments. Specifically, the state developed and adopted the California Alternate Assessments (CAAs), based on alternate achievement standards designed for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The state has also emphasized, through CDE statewide monitoring and through resources offered by its system of support (SILs and the SIP project), that IEP team discussions should reflect student academic and SEL expectations, along with performance and progress data monitoring.

In order to address the need for better access and alignment of CDE data systems to improve the accuracy and effectiveness of data-driven improvement activities related to IEPs, California has focused on streamlining data systems by merging special and general education data. In October 2019, the CDE migrated its statewide special education data, previously housed in a separate data system known as the California Student Management Information System, to the state California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS), which now houses all statewide student data. For additional information on this transition, see the CDE web page at https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sp/cl/c2cnews20181218.asp.

To address improving the quality and alignment of IEP processes across the state, policymakers allocated, in the Budget Act of 2020 (SB 74), $350,000 to convene a workgroup that seeks to make recommendations for a design of a state standardized IEP template, to lead to a student-centered approach to IEPs. At the time of this report, this workgroup is being convened, and recommendations are expected from the group in October 2021.

# Accountability

**Recommendations from the *2015 ONE SYSTEM* Report:**
The Task Force report recommendations for improvements to California's accountability system were described by the Task Force as needing to create a system of accountability that serves the critical function of strengthening and improving the ability to make data-based decision to inform, direct, and support teacher preparation, classroom instruction, individual-goal setting, and meaningful assessment. The report recommended the state create:

- A consolidated and integrated special education data system that identifies and eliminates duplicate reporting, especially in the areas of suspensions, expulsions, and postsecondary outcomes.

- An outcomes-based accountability framework that mirrors federal policy (i.e., the Results Driven Accountability (RDA) framework) and State policy (i.e., Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and LCAP) to evaluate the compliance and performance of public schools throughout the State in educating students with disabilities. Accountability efforts which are congruent: efficient, non-duplicative, and integrated (e.g., using the LCAP to meet the RDA or RDA framework).

- Closely integrated and coordinated state and federal monitoring, data collection, and technical assistance and support efforts from all State agencies and divisions: the Governor's Office, the State Board of Education, the Department of Finance, the Department of Education (both General Education and Special Education divisions), the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, the Department of Rehabilitation, the Department of Developmental Services, Division of Juvenile Justice/Department of Corrections, Juvenile Court Schools, and the Department of Managed Health Care.

## Improving Accountability Milestones

In an effort to create a more coherent system that improves outcomes for students with disabilities, CDE began working in partnership with the CTC on alignment of the credentialing requirements for special education teachers with general education credentialing, in an effort to provide a less siloed, and more inclusive, system. In an effort to improve teaching and learning for all students, this partnership has recently been working on a definition of ineffective and out-of-field teachers to provide clarity and consistency for use in the field. In November 2019, the State Board of Education (SBE) adopted updated teacher equity definitions under ESSA and state reporting requirements. These updated definitions were based on feedback from stakeholders.

Efforts to improve data collection and consolidation for improved accountability has also been a focus of the State, as has been described in several of the previous sections of this report. In the 2019–20 school year, California completed the consolidation of its special education data system and traditional student-level data systems in CALPADS. A unified data system will allow for greater accountability and transparency for data related to outcomes for students with disabilities.

Specifically, CDE and the SBE continue to make efforts to improve accountability and reporting through the California School Dashboard. Recent revisions to the dashboard have prioritized student group metrics, which now include students with disabilities as a significant student group that requires both state- and federal-level monitoring for compliance. This updated reporting is visible on the California School Dashboard, which displays how every LEA in California is doing in relation to serving all students. Visit the California School Dashboard at https://www.caschooldashboard.org to view the updated reports. With the approval of the accountability system in May 2016, the SBE established an annual review process of the California School Dashboard. This process includes the review of state and local indicators and performance standards, to consider necessary changes or improvements, based on newly available data, recent research, and/or stakeholder feedback. The CDE includes state and local indicators of state accountability measures for students with disabilities in the state accountability process, which improves the visibility of these students in this process.

In exploring all of the ways that the state could work to improve and align the accountability system to better support students with disabilities, policymakers commissioned a Special Education Governance & Accountability Study in the 2020 State Budget. The budget allocated $500,000 for a study that would examine the current system of special education governance and accountability and make recommendations regarding improvements in the following areas: (1) delivering special education services and supports in the least restrictive environment; (2) improving student outcomes, including those measured by state and federal accountability systems; (3) ensuring an equitable distribution of special education supports and services to LEAs; (4) ensuring transparency in decision-making and distribution of state special education funding; (5) ensuring parent, family, and community input in local decision-making; (6) ensuring that small LEAs have access to fiscal and administrative resources necessary to serve pupils with exceptional needs; (7) aligning state and federal accountability, compliance, and support systems as related to students with disabilities; and (8) identifying strategies and challenges for funding and supports in the current model and any recommended models. The study report is to be submitted to the legislature, the SBE, and the Department of Finance for consideration in October 2021.

# Family and Student Engagement

**Recommendations from the *2015 ONE SYSTEM* Report:**
The *2015 ONE SYSTEM* report called for improvements to family and student engagement activities and opportunities which are critical to the school and life success of children with disabilities. The report made the following recommendations:

- Fully fund Family Empowerment Centers (FECs) statewide, as already legislated in SB 511, so that each of the 32 FEC regions has a center. See CDE web page on California Parent Organizations for information on FECs and on SB 511 at https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/qa/caprntorg.asp#fec.

- Increase funding to Family Resource Centers (FRCs).

- Establish data-collection systems to monitor the work done by the FRCs and FECs.

- Create clear and specific guidelines and reinforcements for teacher, parent, and school collaboration and interaction.

- Create clear and specific guidelines and reinforcement for student involvement in their own IEP meetings and student-led IEPs.

- Coordinate systems of cross-agency and community-based trainings that focus on collaborative, efficient, and effective services in a seamless delivery system that supports parents and students.

## Improving Family and Student Engagement Milestones

Given the importance of family involvement for success in life, including employment, life satisfaction, and community and social involvement, the state has worked to increase the engagement of families and students, both through additional funding to engage families and through supporting FRCs and FECs. Large funding efforts for enhancing statewide family and student engagement have been focused on (1) an increase to base funding for the centers, and (2) establishing and funding FECs in regions where there are currently no FECs. The State continues to believe that these centers, as well as Family Engagement Networks, are excellent ways to support family and student engagement. Funding for the FRCs is a function of the Department of Developmental Services which is currently exploring ways to increase funding to the FRCs. An additional $7 million was included in the 2021–22 Budget Act to support the expansion of FECs across the state and tasked CDE with creating a data template to collect relevant data elements by June 2022.

The California State Superintendent of Public Instruction's office created the Family Engagement Office in November 2020. The goal of this office is to coordinate all family engagement activities and resources within and throughout the state. The CDE Special Education Division has been working with this office to ensure that students with disabilities are woven into their work.

In an effort to address the need for clarity and guidance for teacher, parent, and school collaboration and interaction, new guidance and resources have been added to the LCFF Priority 3 Family Involvement, which now directly addresses engagement of families of students with disabilities. This new guidance helps to ensure the engagement of these families in the action planning process of LCAP development. In the spring of 2019, the California Practitioners Advisory Group and the SBE approved a Self-Reflection Tool for Districts to use when establishing actions under LCFF Priority 3: Family Involvement. With these resources and tools available, LEAs now have processes to ensure that they engage and capture parent involvement for students with disabilities in this priority area.

The CDE is also providing specific guidance in the area of student involvement in and student-led IEPs. A webinar series, Transition Planning for Students with

Disabilities, which included information on the development of student-led IEPs, was held in 2020. For additional information in the webinar series can be found at https://padlet.com/SIP_Grant/Transition2020. The webinars led up to the Bridge to the Future Institute, which includes information and sessions on student-led IEPs. CDE plans and sponsors the institute, in conjunction with the California Transition Alliance, every 18 months.

The State's Advisory Commission on Special Education (ACSE) made family engagement a priority by setting statewide goals to build infrastructure that connects schools and families. The 2019–20 ACSE report cited an increase in parental engagement in activities and resources provided through the FECs and with the schools, as both educators and families sought to find creative ways to engage children in virtual environments, due to the transition to online instruction as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. For additional information on the ACSE see the CDE web page at https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/as/acse.asp.

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) is an informal process of resolving concerns and/or disagreements related to the provision of special education services to students with special needs. The ADR process encourages all parties to collaboratively solve problems to reach mutually beneficial resolutions without litigation. ADR has also been a priority for the State and has become an integral part of the dispute resolution continuum. During the COVID-19 pandemic, additional funding for SELPAs, in the amount of $8.6 million, was added to this program, and was allocated so that LEAs and families could receive additional support in resolving disputes. For additional information on ADR, see the CDE memo from December 22, 2020, at https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/lr/om122220.asp.

# Special Education Financing

**Recommendations from the *2015 ONE SYSTEM* Report:**
The Task Force report called for improvements to special education financing that provides the resources necessary to address the following: meet the needs of all students with disabilities, encourages greater coherence between general education and special education, is sensitive to changes in enrollment, and invests in the systems, and provides incentives for practices, that will lead to greater success for students. The report made the following recommendations:

- Equalize the State's support for special education across California by overhauling the system of special education financing to give schools and districts more control over how they spend their money and to hold them accountable for adequately meeting the needs of students with disabilities (a model distinct from but coordinated with and similar to the LCFF).

- Ensure the availability of early intervention programs and services for all eligible students with disabilities and address the disparity of early intervention programs and services among early childhood care and education entities.

- Fund SELPAs based on average daily attendance (ADA), but increase the amount allocated per ADA so that SELPAs are more equitably funded.

- Revise the special education funding formula so that the growth or decline in the enrollment of multi-district SELPAs is based on the growth or decline of ADA for each individual district, charter school, or county office of education, instead of on these changes in the SELPA as a whole.

- Secure the integrity of specific special education dollars, especially the money that small SELPAs need in order to operate, as well as funds for educationally related mental health care services and for out-of-home care services.

- Update the electronic data systems that account for special education income and expenditures, thus allowing current CDE fiscal staff to devote more time to analyses, while also allowing SELPA fiscal staff to be more efficient.

- Increase the funding for WorkAbility I programs so that all SELPAs are receiving adequate WorkAbility I funds.

- Provide sufficient funds to LEAs to meet their mandated special education transportation costs.

- Expand ADR resources, supports, and services throughout the State.

## Improving Special Education Financing Milestones

California annually serves more than 795,000 students with disabilities (nearly 12 percent of the state's K–12 population) and invests roughly $12 billion, in federal, state, and local dollars, in special education. Given this investment, an October 2020 report on the statewide special education the funding study released by WestEd highlighted various statewide considerations for re-thinking California's special education finance system. In addition, the Legislative Analyst's Office  continues to spearhead efforts to build collective understanding of the funding system and increase funding opportunities for students with disabilities. The California Special Education Funding System Study report can be found on the WestEd website at https://www.wested.org/resources/ca-special-education-funding-system.

The State reaffirmed its commitment to special education funding in June 2020 with an increase to the per-pupil base rate for special education programs. The State's commitment to prioritize funding for special education is outlined in the CDE's July 15, 2020 memo to the field on the 2020 Budget Act and special education. This commitment to funding is also evidenced in the 2021–22 State Budget, which includes $656 million in new and ongoing funding for special education. This includes a 4.5 percent cost-of-living adjustment for special education and an increase in the base grant special education funding rates, which vary widely, based on a school district's special education expenditures from the 1990s. This disparity is not primarily the result of differences in populations; rather, it is the result of a system in which many areas with historically lower per-pupil rates receive lower funding, which was based on the original funding model, despite being held to the same state and federal responsibilities for students with disabilities. Funding for preschool-age children with disabilities and support for districts that have the responsibility to serve these children continue to be priorities of the State. Two new efforts, the California Master Plan for Early Learning and Care and the second phase of the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five Renewal (PDG-R), are examples of the State's efforts to align and streamline data, funding, and programs. The Preschool through Third Grade (P-3) Alignment highlights the CDE's commitment to inclusive and multilingual high-quality preschool, strong intervention services, and P-3 alignment for all of California's young children. For information on the California Master Plan for Early Learning and Care see the California Health and Human Services (CHHS) web page at https://www.chhs.ca.gov/home/master-plan-for-early-learning-and-care and for additional information on the PDG-R, see the website at https://www.chhs.ca.gov/blog/2020/01/28/pdgr. For information on the P-3 Alignment, see the CDE web page at https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/p3.

Policymakers have continued to provide support for funding students in need and students who require significant support, such as students with low-incidence disabilities and students who are in high-cost programs such as home/hospital, non-public schools, and out-of-district placements. Early learning financial investments by the State, prioritized by the Governor, have led to California investing heavily in state-funded preschools to help better support access for students with disabilities; however, preschool funding is separate from the special education funding for educating preschool children with disabilities, and aligning these funding streams continues to be a milestone that the state is focused on achieving.

# Appendices

## APPENDIX A. General Education Standards and Teacher Performance Expectations

This appendix provides information about where key concepts called for in the *2015 ONE SYSTEM* report are included in general education standards and TPEs. These are the common knowledge and skills for all teachers serving in both general education and special education settings.

- UDL: TPEs 1.4 and 4.4; assessed on the TPAs

- MTSS: TPEs 1.4 and 4.4

- RtI[2]: Similar language (not exact) in TPE 2.1

- Positive behavioral interventions and supports: multiple subject/single subject (MS/SS) Standard 1, TPE 2.1 (especially in narrative section)

- Use of data: computer science (CS) 4 and 5, MS/SS Standards 3 and 5, TPEs 4 and 5; assessed on the TPA

- Reading instruction: New TPE Part 2 language (implementing in 2021–22)

- Linguistic needs of English learners: TPEs 1.6, 3.5, 4.4, 5.6, and 5.7, and throughout subject-specific pedagogy; assessed on TPA

- Digital literacy: TPEs 3.7 and 4.8

- Instructional technology: TPEs 3.6 and 4.4; assessed on TPA

- Cultural and linguistic competency and responsiveness: TPEs 1.1, 4.1, and 4.4; Part 2 Introduction (Developmentally Appropriate Practices in Relation to Subject-Specific Pedagogy)

## APPENDIX B. Least Restrictive Environment in General Education TPEs

The education specialist TPEs also have an increased focus on inclusive practices and collaboration for success with students with disabilities to receive their education in the least restrictive environment (LRE). LRE and inclusion in general education

are addressed in the general education TPEs 1.4, 1.6, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 3.2, 3.5, 3.6, 4.2, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 5.6, 5.8, and 6.5, and in the education specialist TPEs 1.1, 2.1, 2.4, 2.8, 3.1, 4.2, 4.4, and 5.1.

Therefore, in addition to the basic tenets of IDEA that ensure that students with disabilities have access to the LRE, several TPEs refer to inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education setting. This model of preparation, in which educators are receiving a common foundation of preparation to serve all students, equips all teachers with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to serve students in the LRE.

## APPENDIX C. Special Education Teaching Performance Expectations Related to Assistive Technology and Augmentative and Alternative Communication Systems

Specific teaching performance expectations for special educators in relation to assistive technology and augmentative and alternative communication systems are Mild to Moderate-TPEs (MM-TPEs) 1.2, 2.1, 4.1, and 5.2.

The importance of transitions in the life of a student with disabilities is a part of the teacher preparation program for all education specialist preliminary credential programs. Specific TPEs related to transitions have been identified for beginning special education teachers in the following TPEs: MM-TPEs 1.6 and 4.6, as well as Extensive Support Needs (ESN-TPEs) 2.1, 2.5, 3.1, and 4.3.

## APPENDIX D. Alternate Assessments Aligned with California Standards

The following California alternate assessments are directly and rigorously aligned with California standards:

- CAAs for English language arts/literacy (ELA) and mathematics

  - Designed using alternate achievement standards, known as the Core Content Connectors, which are aligned with the California Common Core State Standards for ELA and mathematics.

  - First operational administration was in 2015–16.

  - Results are available at the CDE public reporting website at https://caaspp-elpac.cde.ca.gov/caaspp.

- More information is available at the California Alternate Assessments for ELA and math web page at https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/ca/altassessment.asp.

- CAA for Science

  - Designed using alternate science standards, called the Science Core Content Connectors, which are drawn from the California Next Generation Science Standards.

  - 2016–17, Pilot Year 1; 2017–18, Pilot Year 2; 2018–19, Field Test; 2019–20, first operational administration (delayed until 2020–21).

  - Results for the preliminary indicators for the 2018–19 CAA for Science field test administration are available at the CDE public reporting website at https://caaspp-elpac.cde.ca.gov/caaspp/AdditionalResources, on the Additional Resources page.

  - More information is available at the California Alternate Assessment for Science web page at https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/ca/caascience.asp.

- Alternate English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC)

  - Designed using English Language Development Connectors derived from the Council of Chief State School Officers English Language Proficiency Standards for English Learners with Significant Cognitive Disabilities, which are aligned to the 2012 California English Language Development Standards. The CCSSO document can be found at https://ccsso.org/sites/default/files/2019-02/K-12%20ELP%20Standards%20for%20ELs%20with%20significant%20cognitive%20disabilities%202019%2002%2015%20.pdf.

  - 2019–20, Pilot; 2020–21, Operational Field Test.

  - More information is available at the Alternate ELPAC web page at https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/ep/alternateelpac.asp.

  - Guidelines for IEP teams regarding participation in the CAAs and the Alternate ELPAC are provided on the Alternate Assessment IEP Team Guidance web page at https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/ca/caaiepteamrev.asp.

California's Progress Toward Achieving *ONE SYSTEM:*
Reforming Education to Serve ALL Students

Policy and System Changes Impacting Students
with Disabilities Since the 2015 Report of California's
Statewide Task Force on Special Education